

ANIMAL CRACKERS

ANIL

Perth, Australia

What do the following vertebrates have in common? This is a logological puzzle, no knowledge of zoology required. If you need help, see below.

- the Indian bloodsucker AGAMID lizard, *Calotes versicolor* [no relation to the vampire]
- the spring BABBLER, *Turdoides nipalensis* [no relation to the bullshit artist]
- Seba's short tailed BAT, *Carollia perspicillata* [no relation to the spectacled owl below]
- the tomb BAT, *Taphozus perforatus* [no relation to the wombat]
- the armored CHAMELEON, *Leandria permeata* [no relation to the camouflaged tank]
- Kerr's DANIO fish, *Brachydanio kerri*
- Peron's DOLPHIN, *Lissodelphis peronii*
- the sooty FALCON, *Falco concolor*
- The Bonin FINCH, *Chaunoproctus ferreorostris*
- the masked FINFOOT rail, *Heliopais personata* [the great rail robber?]
- the Afghan FOX, *Vulpes canus* [no relation to al-Qaida]
- the chestnut-naped FRANCOLIN, *Francolinus castaneicollis*
- the brevicipid FROG, *Breviceps adspersus*
- the spruce GROUSE, *Canachites canadensis* [no relation to Howard Hughes]
- the spectacled OWL, *Pulsatrix perspicillata* [poorer unaided vision than other owls?]
- the masked PARAKEET, *Prosopieia personata* [no relation to the finfoot--or is there? Can't tell!]
- Bulwer's PETREL, *Bulweria bulwerii*
- the spectacled SALAMANDER, *Salamandra terdigitata* [no relation to the spectacled owl]
- the brown-billed SCYHE BILL woodcreeper, *Campylorhamphus pusillus* [worth two bills?]
- Verreaux's SIFAKA lemur, *Propithecus verreauxi*
- the desert SPARROW, *Passer simplex*
- the gray-backed STORM PETREL, *Garrodia nereis*
- the chimney SWIFT, *Chaetura pelagica* [no relation to the chimney sweep]

The title is a clue. Also, the property in question is *only* shown by these of all the vertebrate species listed in ten vols. of Grzimek's *Animal Life Encyclopaedia*. A final giveaway clue is that the falcon is a perfectly felicitous case. The petrel comes close, the salamander a bit less so.

And the answer is... if you combine the first three letters of each of the Latin names, genus and species, they form a common word, unhyphenated, uncapitalised. (The falcon yields itself, *Fal.con.*, the petrel yields another bird and the salamander yields a fish.) This three-plus-three gimmick isn't arbitrary. I got the idea from a seedsman who told me they use such hexagrams as abbreviations for their stock and that they occasionally make real words. This style is also used in other computer search situations involving two words, like proper names if not too large a list.

While I wasn't looking for it, the giant dinosaur *Megalosaurus bucklandi* jumped out at me with a 4+4=8-letter 'cracked word', one more familiar in the plural. I also noted some 3+4=7 crackers like travail, carcass, parvenu and chasing, and some synonymous trigram pairs like cut=nip and dip=sag. Unlike this short list of 6s, there were over two hundred 2+2=4 letter words, including seven from the above.